



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

September 25, 2003

The Honorable J. Gresham Barrett
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Barrett:

Thank you for your August 8, 2003, letter regarding my guidance memorandum providing direction for restructuring and managing the procurement mechanisms that support the activities of the Environmental Management (EM) Site Specific Advisory Boards (SSABs). I share your concern that "inhibiting the ability of the community to engage in dialogue with the Department of Energy on issues affecting the cleanup efforts" would be undesirable, and I want to assure you that my SSAB guidance memorandum does not affect that important relationship. In no way does it change my policy or support regarding the value and importance of the EM SSABs.

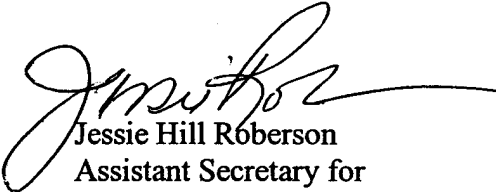
The EM SSAB Charter's provisions require the Department to provide the resources sufficient to conduct EM SSAB business. That support remains paramount. My objective is to insure that the SSABs' independence is maintained in their relationship with the Department. To that end, my memorandum is intended to improve the visibility, management, and accountability of resources provided to support necessary SSAB activities, and in no way will impact the ability of the SSAB or the community to engage in dialogue with the Department or, for that matter, with the site contractor. We continue to encourage the maximum level of communication between the SSABs and the contractors, but within the provisions of the EM SSAB Charter.

We want to insure that the integrity of the SSABs is maintained, as well as the credibility of their work products. Only by ensuring this independence will the optimum value be provided to the community while rendering an effective cleanup operation for the American taxpayer.



If you have any further questions, please call me at (202) 586-7709 or Ms. Jill Sigal, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 586-4810.

Sincerely,



Jessie Hill Roberson
Assistant Secretary for
Environmental Management